

## Lakeshore Weekly News (Wayzata, MN)

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### The 'seamless life'

By Meghan Davy Reporter

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#### Article Text:

Decades ago, starting a family often presented young women with a difficult reality, as a new baby meant the effective end of careers they had worked hard to build.

Today, many new mothers are making it clear that they don't have to choose one over the other, as two local attorneys are demonstrating through their creative approach to the work-family balance.

Minnetonka natives Amanda Bloomgren and Katie Hanson met as law students at the University of Saint Thomas and quickly became close friends. Four years into practicing separately — Hanson as a judge's clerk and Bloomgren with a small firm in Waconia — they pursued the long-time mutual goal of opening their own practice.

Bloomgren Hanson Legal opened its doors in April 2011, and is now located on Mainstreet in Hopkins.

Unlike most practices, however, theirs includes a baby's pack-and-play, and often a little Chihuahua named Biggie Smalls sitting in the window.

Hanson has been bringing her 11-month-old daughter into the office two days a week since she was about two months old, and Bloomgren, owner of the notorious rapper's tiny namesake, plans to do the same when she has her first child in the fall.

"The way I describe it is I talk about wanting a seamless life. Katie is my best friend, so I'm able to work with a best friend and I'm able to have my family life and my work life very integrated. I'm not one of those people that wants to go to work from 8 to 5 and go home and turn off my job, and I feel like when you're an entrepreneur it's pretty impossible to do that. So this way we're able to make it work," Bloomgren said. "I've said to other people that if someone offered me another job at this point I don't think I would take it. I don't think there is an amount of money that you could pay me or a job you could offer me that I would want."

The two friends sought to reinvent the small town, general law firm with Bloomgren Hanson — Bloomgren covers real estate and small business work, and Hanson does estate planning. However, it has become known mostly for family law, which Bloomgren estimates makes up 60 to 70 percent

of the practice.

Bloomgren said they seek clients who will be open to the environment that she and Hanson, the firm's only practicing attorneys, have created.

Both made an effort to schedule client meetings on Mondays and Wednesdays to lessen interruptions, as the baby's days were Tuesdays and Thursdays. Often, clients would ask where the baby was, and many looked forward to seeing her during appointments. Hanson said that having an "office baby" fit well with the firm's overall intended feel and goals.

"We were both going to be flexible with having the baby there so it ended up being a great situation for us, because my family didn't have to get daycare for the baby and we were still able to make our work life work. Amanda was very helpful with that, I think that was an integral part," said Hanson, who is also the mother of a 4-year-old. "I don't think everybody can do it, but the two of us working together, were able to do that. It was important to us to maintain a professional atmosphere as well, even though we were going to have the baby in the office too."

As the torch passes from one office baby to another — Hanson's little girl is crawling and will soon be too mobile to maintain her previous workplace schedule — both attorney-mothers were able to look back on the previous year, and offer advice to other moms working outside the home, seeking a way to strike that ever-present dilemma of balance.

"I think that it's important for everyone to find what works for them. I have a few friends who are working in a traditional corporate legal environment, and that works for them. A couple of them have stay at home dads for their kids, and that's awesome too. I have other friends who are stay-at-home moms, so you have to find something that works for you," Bloomgren said.

"I think it's important to be able to fulfill your work goals and your family goals and to be able to do that at the same time, and you need to be able to find a situation that allows for that. Going out on our own, it took a lot of courage to do that. We both left jobs to start our own practice. But we knew that family was going to be important to us and we needed to have that flexibility, and by doing that it provided us with the opportunity to balance family and work and fulfill both parts of our life. That was what was important," Hanson said. "I would just say that it can be done, don't get discouraged. Just set your priorities and find a way to make it work."

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